

Report by Education Scotland addressing educational aspects of the proposal by The Highland Council to create a new primary school for Dunvegan, located on a new site at Lonmore.

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments contained in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of The Highland Council's proposal to create a new primary school for Dunvegan, located on a new site at Lonmore. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision. Where a council is proposing to close a school, it needs to follow all legislative obligations set out in the 2010 Act, including notifying Ministers within six working days of making its final decision and explaining to consultees the opportunity they have to make representations to Ministers.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the school; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visit to the site of Dunvegan Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation Process

2.1 The Highland Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010* and the amendments in the *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014*. The statutory consultation period ran from 7 November until 19 December 2016. Prior to the formal consultation, the council held discussions with various stakeholders including Dunvegan Primary School Parent Council, the community council, representatives of the local agricultural show, the local estate landowner and representatives of North West Skye Recreational Association. Copies of the proposal document were shared with parents of current pupils attending Dunvegan Primary or pre-school. Information was made available to staff, trade union representatives and wider community organisations and on The Highland Council's website.

2.2 The council received 76 written responses to the public consultation, of which 71 expressed an overall level of support or opposition to the proposal. Of the 71 responses, 99% expressed support for the proposal. An additional 36 responses came from pupils, with most (80%) expressing support for the proposal. The council held a public meeting on 30 November 2016 at Dunvegan Primary School, which was attended by officers of the council, two elected members and 16 parents/members of the public.

3. Educational Aspects of Proposal

3.1 The proposal to create a new school building for Dunvegan Primary School has clear educational benefits. The school is currently located across one main building and three temporary demountable units. None of the four current buildings are in a good condition. Two of the demountable units do not have pupil toilet facilities. The council has identified that the school is in poor condition, both for educational suitability and for building condition. The council has indicated that significant investment would be required to keep the current Dunvegan Primary School buildings operational. Additionally, there are health and safety concerns in the current school, with vehicles driving through the school playground to access the car park or make deliveries to school. The proposal has the potential to deliver Curriculum for Excellence within modern, purpose-built accommodation creating a more positive environment with more flexible learning spaces. All classes, including the pre-school and canteen would be located in the one building. Additionally, the proposal includes wider community access, including enhanced sporting facilities. Safe and secure traffic management around the school would be addressed.

3.2 Almost all stakeholders who submitted written responses and all staff, parents and almost all children who met with HM Inspectors were strongly in favour of the proposal for a new building for Dunvegan Primary School. They felt a new school building would have a positive impact on children's learning. All stakeholders report challenges with the current building, which were evident to HM Inspectors. Children and other stakeholders recognise the many potential benefits of a new school. They are keen not to lose access to natural outdoor playgrounds in any future school, given the current large natural outdoor school grounds available to them. Stakeholders also shared their enthusiasm for the potential benefits to the wider North West Skye community, in a purpose-built new school with community access,

including sports facilities. Stakeholders are keen for close involvement in planning for sustainable wider community opportunities in any new school. In taking its proposal forward, the council should ensure that there is clear involvement with stakeholders regarding natural outdoor school grounds and planning for wider community opportunities.

4. Summary

The proposal to create a new school building for Dunvegan Primary School is of clear educational benefit. The proposal has the support of almost all stakeholders. The current school is located across four buildings, none of which are in a good condition. The proposal has the potential to improve the quality of the curriculum and deliver Curriculum for Excellence within modern, purpose-built accommodation, creating a more positive environment for effective learning and teaching. Additionally, the proposal includes wider community access, including enhanced sporting facilities. There are health and safety concerns regarding vehicular access to the current school. Safe and secure traffic management around the school would be addressed. The council has indicated that significant investment would be required to keep the current Dunvegan Primary School buildings operational. In taking its proposal forward, the council should ensure that there is clear involvement with stakeholders regarding natural outdoor school grounds and planning for wider community opportunities.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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